

Once there was industry, but the businesses now serve commuters

"You'll never get rich in a small town because everybody's watching you."

So reads a small sign at the entrance to Sherman Nelson's Warsaw home. Mr Nelson owns Warsaw Bus Lines and is deputy reeve of Dummer Township. His sign is appropriate: everybody I met asked if I were "the guy taking pictures."

Warsaw's commercial base has been on the decline for several years. The saw mills, grist mill, bank, and bakery are all gone now. Where there were two grocery stores and two garages, the hamlet now supports only one of each.

On the main street, a handful of businesses - Warsaw Bus Lines, Warsaw Food Market, Quirk's Garage, Warsaw Lunch - are still alive and doing reasonably well.

Warsaw Food Market, purchased last year by the O'Tooles, has changed hands four times since 1970, and the present owners are just now bringing back the business that drifted away with the mismanagement of the second owners. O'Toole now operates the store, but on Thursday she escaped to Peterborough and left her husband Gerry to mind the store.

It's a general grocery store in the style that prevailed from the turn of the century until the early sixties when the supermarket craze caught hold. Wooden shelves hold boxed and canned goods; perishable goods are kept to a minimum so they won't spoil before purchase; the ceiling is ornately designed with sculptured gray tin sheets; a fat furry cat sleeps on the bare wood floor.

The O'Tooles lived in Toronto for awhile, then moved to Peterborough where Gerry opened a business, then out to Warsaw when they also purchased the store.

Gerry O'Toole said most people have freezers and buy sides of meat, which saves them the problem of keeping large quantities of meat in cold storage in the store.

Warsaw's food trade is mainly with those local people who prefer the convenience of shopping close to home, or believe in supporting a local store. Mr O'Toole admitted that some people "treat it like a Becker's" convenience store and do most of their shopping in Peterborough.

Quirk's Garage just east of the store has all the business Terry Quirk wants to handle. He specializes in tires and tries to carry lines of parts that places like Canadian Tire don't handle.

"A guy came in just the other day with a tire he bought at Canadian Tire. It wouldn't hold air, and it's no wonder because when I tried to blow it up, there was a hole in it almost the size of my finger."

"The guy was worried that he couldn't return it because he didn't have the bill. Well he'd never have had to worry about that if he bought it here."

Mr Quirk has doubled the size of the garage since he bought it six years ago and has since purchased the former general store on the corner where he now stores garage supplies. He may eventually use the old store himself or somebody else may get an idea for a business and buy it from him.

When I first stopped at Warsaw Bus Lines, the door was unlocked but nobody was in - an indication of the trust generated in a small town. I found Sherman Nelson wiring a stove in his house across the street.

Warsaw Bus Lines operates 11 buses, mostly taking Dummer Township's children to Warsaw Public School. Four school buses provide all the transportation to the public school, built in 1961 when the red brick schools were closed and education was consolidated in central schools.

Nelson's drivers take two busloads a day to Lakefield High School and one mixed bus load of Roman Catholic, public and high school children to Norwood.

Two small vans take kindergarten children from Warsaw Public School home at noon and two other buses handle the charter business and a twice daily commuter service from Warsaw to Peterborough.

The commuter service once operated on Saturday, but the only

